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# FAIR · ELECTIONS · LEGAL · NETWORK

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May 27, 2009

The Honorable Jean Cunningham, Chair  
State Board of Elections  
Washington Building, First Floor  
1100 Bank Street  
Richmond, VA 23219

Re: Voter Registration Task Force Appointment

Dear Chairwoman Cunningham:

I am the legal director of the Fair Elections Legal Network (FELN), a national nonpartisan advocacy organization working with its network of state election attorneys and voter reform, registration and mobilization groups to improve election administration and increase voter participation among traditionally under participating constituencies, including students. I am writing to ask that an appropriate representative of our organization be appointed to one of the three open seats on the voter registration task force recently created to examine the Commonwealth's residency law and its impact on college or university students seeking to register to vote in their school communities.

Our organization works on a number of election administration issues with the goal of removing barriers to voting. These issues include HAVA and NVRA compliance, allocation of polling place resources, implementation of voter ID requirements and residency and voter registration requirements. We have paid particular attention to how all of these issues impact student voters, especially state residency laws and their implementation by election officials.

During the 2008 election cycle FELN worked in Virginia closely with state voter reform, mobilization, labor and grass roots groups to support their efforts to help students register to vote in their college communities. In light of confusing information that had been disseminated during the voter registration period, we contacted college and university officials explaining the right of students attending school in the Commonwealth to register to vote in their college communities. The letter was accompanied by "Frequently Asked Questions" that administrators distributed to students. We also sent letters to every local Registrar outlining Virginia law on residency and asked that it be followed to permit eligible students to register to vote in their college communities.

In addition to our work in Virginia, we have worked closely with national and local student organizations to explain how state residency laws apply to college students seeking to vote in their college communities through trainings and providing instructional materials, including state voter registration guides. We have also worked collaboratively with officials in those states to facilitate student registration and voting.

We commend Virginia's legislature and the State Board of Elections for recognizing the need to examine the impact of the Commonwealth's residency requirements on student voters. Given our expertise in general, and our particular familiarity with Virginia law and its implementation by local officials, we respectfully ask that we be appointed to serve on the Voter Registration Task Force to work collaboratively with the other participants on this important matter.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Neuman', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Karen L. Neuman, Legal Director  
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2020-09-01 10:00 AM